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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 000839

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [CT](#) [MY](#) [PGOV](#) [KTIP](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER:
TIP AND CT COOPERATION

Classified By: Ambassador James R. Keith for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

1. (C) Home Affairs Minister Hishamuddin Hussein told the Ambassador during a wide-ranging 90-minute meeting on October 21 that the GOM would publish its Trafficking in Persons (TIP) action plan soon and that it was a priority for him and Prime Minister Najib to make significant progress on the issue. (Note: PM Najib is his cousin. End Note.) He asked for USG and Embassy assistance establishing working groups on the main TIP issues and providing needed training for "rising leaders" in his ministry, which includes immigration, police and the Attorney General. Hishamuddin identified interagency coordination as a key difficulty for the GOM and expressed appreciation for the Ambassador's explanation of how the NSC functions in the U.S. He stressed the importance of continued counter-terrorism cooperation with the USG and said his ministry was committed to reducing crime in Malaysia by 20 percent during 2010. He expressed interest in visiting Washington, showing interest in the Ambassador's suggestion of consultations with DHS, along with DOJ, law enforcement, and State.

2. (C) Comment: Hishamuddin exuded enthusiasm, telling the Ambassador that he wanted an "open relationship" with the U.S. Embassy including frequent meetings between relevant officials on CT, TIP and interagency coordination issues. Following up immediately, his staff contacted the Embassy on October 22 to request an October 23 meeting with a range of Embassy officers. Hishamuddin is a Najib confidante who is on the hot seat; he must deliver positive results across a very broad range of sensitive issues if he is to continue to rise in the ruling party. With regard to trafficking, he perceives Malaysia's partnership with Australia on human smuggling as a model of cooperative and mutually beneficial relations. He is also the key policy official below the Prime Minister tasked with managing counter-terrorism and the potential for religious extremists to develop a base in Malaysia. He wants to learn from the U.S. and seeks as much help as he can get to enable Malaysia to manage security and criminal challenges. End Summary and Comment.

TIP

3. (C) Minister of Home Affairs Hishammuddin, in office since April 2009 after a stint as Education Minister, told the Ambassador during an October 21 meeting that the TIP issue was being tackled anew by Malaysians and he requested advice and assistance on how to best address the problem. When the Ambassador suggested that the first step would be to publish a comprehensive National TIP action plan in conjunction with a public awareness campaign, Hissammuddin said "Done!", assuring the Ambassador that the GOM would publish its action plan soon and that it was a priority for him and Prime Minister Najib to make significant progress on

the issue. The Ambassador went on to explain that a key step in addressing labor trafficking is for the GOM to see the victims of TIP as victims and not as illegal immigrants.

14. (C) Hishammuddin inquired as to what would be the best way for Malaysia to move forward in its anti-TIP efforts -) whether by increasing security on passports, improving victim's shelters, or addressing immigration and refugee issues. Using South Korea as an example, the Ambassador explained how a country that previously had a significant trafficking problem properly addressed it by executing a public awareness campaign, implementing a process to identify trafficking victims to separate them from traffickers, and successfully prosecuting traffickers. Today, South Korea is listed as a tier one country and the Ambassador suggested that Malaysia could follow a similar path.

15. (C) The Ambassador emphasized the need for Malaysia to start concentrating its efforts toward the significant labor trafficking problem within its borders. He explained that this is a global problem that should be addressed regionally and suggested ASEAN might be the best forum for coordinating its efforts. Hishammuddin acknowledged that TIP was modern-day slavery and that Malaysia needs to act. He referred to the 50,000 unemployed Bangladeshis currently living in Malaysia as "a time bomb."

16. (C) Hishammuddin requested USG and Embassy assistance establishing working groups on the main TIP issues and providing needed training for "rising leaders" in his ministry, which includes immigration, police and the Attorney General's chambers. He identified Secretary General Datuk Mahmood Adam, also present at the meeting, who chairs the GOM TIP Council, as the point person for such coordination.

17. (C) On the issue of refugees, Ambassador Keith offered

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that the GOM signing the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees would be an excellent goal, toward which short- and medium-term efforts could be directed. Hishammuddin noted that this was a very sensitive issue but that he would study it and consider the Ambassador's concerns.

CT

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18. (S) Hishamuddin noted that Malaysia was as yet "unscathed" by terrorist attacks, but expressed concern about the possibility of renewed activity on the part of Jemaah Islamiyah, possibly with Al Qaeda involvement, stressing the need for the GOM's continued cooperation with the USG. The Ambassador agreed that CT cooperation was a pillar of the bilateral relationship and noted that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security was analogous to Hishamuddin's Home Affairs Ministry in having multi-faceted responsibility for protection against terrorist attacks, having been established for that purpose after 9/11. Hishamuddin expressed interest in traveling to Washington, D.C. in the near future for meetings with DHS, law enforcement, and State officials to discuss CT, TIP and interagency coordination, the last of which he described as "unfamiliar terrain" for the GOM.

19. (C) Hishamuddin said that he was seeking ideas and advice on how to continue protecting Malaysia against terrorism. He noted that there was public pressure to amend Malaysia's Internal Security Act (ISA, which allows detention without charges being filed), but that amending it under the current circumstances of increased concern about the possibility of terrorist attacks would "not be easy." Hishamuddin posited that Indonesia had a tendency to push potential terrorists to Malaysia where they could be apprehended under the ISA. Hishamuddin welcomed the Ambassador's offer to put Home Affairs staff in touch with the Embassy's Regional Security Initiative officer for further discussion of regional CT cooperation.

110. (C) Hishamuddin said that he was concerned that young Malaysians could become disenchanting with western culture, as well as become economically marginalized, turning to radical organizations such as Al Qaeda. On the other hand, Malaysia

and Indonesia were home to the largest number of moderate Muslims in the world, and should be able to project a moderate image of Islam. Islamic scholars in Malaysia and Indonesia who could be spokespersons for a productive, modern perspective were all too silent; they had an obligation to lead and to be heard, Hishamuddin averred.

CRIME

¶11. (C) In response to the Ambassador's comment that American citizens including Embassy personnel had been targets of crimes recently, Hishamuddin said his Ministry was committed to reducing crime by 20 percent during 2010, noting that the public was upset about rising crime rates. His Ministry had considered the UK's method of installing many more CCTV units for surveillance of public areas and increasing use of mobile police units, especially in 50 "hotspots" around the country.

He was also looking into making mobile phones permanently deactivated if reported stolen to remove what is seen as the main incentive for purse snatching. He acknowledged the Ambassador's point that foreign investors were also concerned about street crime as well as residential and warehouse burglaries, and requested further information about American companies' concerns, which the Ambassador agreed to provide.

KEITH